

V. 2. 28

# The Rarest BALLAD that ever was seen, Of the blind Beggar's Daughter of Bednall-green.

IT was a blind Beggar that long lost his Sight,  
He had a fair Daughter of Beauty most bright;  
And many a gallant brave Suitor had she,  
For none was so comely as pretty Bessie.  
And though she was of favour most fair,  
Yet seeing she was but a Beggar's Heir,  
Of ancient House keepers despised was she,  
Who came as Suitors to pretty Bessie.  
Wherefore in great Sorrow fair Bessie did say,  
Good Father and Mother, let me go my Way,  
To seek out my Fortune where ever it be;  
The Suit was then granted to pretty Bessie.  
Thus Bessie, that was of Beauty most bright,  
Then clad in grey Ruffet, and late in the Night,  
From Father and Mother alone parted she,  
Who sighed and sobbed for pretty Bessie.  
She went till she came to Stratford near Bow,  
Then she knew not whither nor which way to go,  
With Tears she lamented her hard Destiny,  
So sad and so heavy was pretty Bessie.  
She kept on her Journey until it was Day,  
And went into Rumford along the Highway;  
And at the King's Arms entertained was she,  
So fair and well-favour'd was pretty Bessie.  
She had not been there one month to an end,  
But Master and Mistress and all were her Friend;  
And every brave Gallant that once did her see,  
Was straightway in love with pretty Bessie.  
Great Gifts they did send her of Silver and Gold,  
And in their Songs daily her Love they extoll'd;  
Her Beauty was blazed in every Degree,  
So fair and so comely was pretty Bessie.  
The young Men of Rumford in her had their Joy,  
She shew'd herself courteous, but never too coy;  
And at her Command still would they be,  
So fair and so comely was pretty Bessie.  
Four Suitors at once unto her did go,  
They craved her Favour, but still she said no,  
I would not wish Gentlemen to marry with me;  
Yet ever they honour'd pretty Bessie.  
The one of them was a gallant young Knight,  
And he came to her disguis'd in the Night;  
The second a Gentleman of good Degree,  
Who wooed and sued for pretty Bessie.  
A Merchant of London, whose Wealth was not small,  
Was then the third Suitor, and proper withal;  
Her Master's own Son the fourth Man must be,  
Who swore he would die for pretty Bessie.  
And if thou wilt marry me, quoth the Knight,  
I'll make thee a Lady with Joy and Delight,  
My Heart is enthrall'd by thy fair Beauty,  
Then grant me thy Love, my pretty Bessie.  
The Gentleman said, come, marry with me,  
In Silks and in Velvet my Bessie shall be;  
My Life's distressed, O hear me, quoth he,  
And grant me thy Love, my pretty Bessie.  
Let me be thy Husband, the Merchant did say,  
Thou shalt live in London most gallant and gay,  
My Ships shall bring home rich Jewels for thee,  
And I will ever love pretty Bessie.  
Then Bessie she sigh'd, and thus she did say,  
My Father and Mother I mean to obey,  
First get their good Will, and be faithful to me,  
And you shall enjoy your pretty Bessie.  
To every one this Answer she made,  
Wherefore unto her they joyfully said,  
This Thing to fulfill we all do agree,  
But where dwells thy Father, my pretty Bessie.  
My Father, quoth she, is plain to be seen,  
The silly blind Beggar of Bednall green,

That daily sits begging for Charity,  
He is the good Father of pretty Bessie.  
His Marks and his Tokens are known full well,  
He always is led with a Dog and a Bell;  
A silly old Man, God knoweth, is he,  
Yet he is the Father of pretty Bessie.  
Nay, then quoth the Merchant, thou art not for me;  
Nor, quoth the Innholder, my Bride shall not be;  
I loath, quoth the Gentleman, a Beggar's Degree,  
Therefore fare you well, my pretty Bessie.  
Why, then quoth the Knight, hap better or worse,  
I weigh not true Love by the Weight of my Purse,  
And Beauty is Beauty in every Degree,  
Then welcome to me, my pretty Bessie.  
With thee to thy Father forthwith I will go;  
Nay soft, quoth his Kinsman, it must not be so,  
A Beggar's Daughter no Lady shall be,  
Then take thy adieu of pretty Bessie.  
And soon after this, by Break of the Day,  
The Knight had from Rumford stole Bessie away;  
The young Men of Rumford so sick as may be,  
Rode after to fetch again pretty Bessie.  
As swift as the Wind to ride they were seen,  
Until they came near unto Bednall-green;  
And as the Knight lighted most courteously,  
They fought against him for pretty Bessie.  
But Rescue came presently over the Plain,  
Or else the Knight for his Love had been slain;  
The Fray being ended, then strait he did see,  
His Kinsman come railing at pretty Bessie.  
Then spake the blind Beggar, Altho' I be poor,  
Rail not against my Child at my own Door;  
Though she be not deckt with Velvet and Pearl,  
Yet I will drop Angels with thee for my Girl.  
And then if my Gold will better her Birth,  
And equal the Gold that you lay on the Earth,  
Then neither rail nor grudge you to see  
The blind Beggar's Daughter a Lady to be.  
But first I will hear, and have it well known,  
The Gold that you drop shall be all your own:  
With that they reply'd, contented we be;  
Then there, quoth the Beggar, for pretty Bessie.  
With that an Angel he cast on the Ground,  
And daopped in Angels full three thousand Pounds;  
And oftentimes it proved most plain,  
For the Gentleman's one the Beggar dropt twain.  
So as the Place where he did sit,  
With Gold was cover'd every whit:  
The Gentleman having dropt all his Store,  
Said, Beggar, hold, for I have no more.  
Thou hast fulfilled thy Promise aright;  
Then marry my Girl, quoth he to the Knight;  
And here, quoth he, I'll throw you down  
A hundred Pound more to buy her a Gown.  
The Gentlemen all that his Treasure had seen,  
Admir'd the Beggar of Bednall green;  
And those that were her Suitors before,  
Their Flesh for very Anger they tore.  
Thus was their Bessie a Match for a Knight,  
And made a Lady in others despight;  
A fairer Lady there never was seen,  
Than the Beggar's Daughter of Bednall-green.  
But of her sumptuous Marriage and Feast,  
And what brave Lords and Knights thither were prest,  
The second Part shall set forth to your Sight,  
With marvellous Pleasure and wished Delight.  
Of a blind Beggar's Daughter most fair and bright,  
That late was betrothed to a young Knight,  
All the Discourse thereof you may see;  
But now comes the Wedding of pretty Bessie.

## The Second PART.



Wlthin a gallant Palace most brave,  
Adorned with all the Cost they could have,  
This Wedding was kept most sumptuously,  
And all for the Love of pretty Bessie.  
All kind of Dainties most delicate sweet,  
Were brought to their Banquet, as was thought meet;  
Partridge, Plover, nay Venison most free,  
Against the brave Wedding of pretty Bessie.  
This Wedding thro' England was spread by report,  
So that great Numbers did thither resort,  
Of Nobles and Gentles of every Degree,  
And all for the Fame of pretty Bessie.  
To Church then went this gallant young Knight,  
His Bride follow'd after like a Lady most bright,  
With Troops of Ladies, the like was ne'er seen,  
As went with sweet Bessie to Bednall green.  
This Wedding being solemnized then,  
With Musick performed by skillful Men;  
The Nobles and Gentles sat down at that Tide,  
Each one holding the beautiful Bride.  
But after the sumptuous Dinner was done,  
To talk and to reason a Number began,  
Of the blind Beggar's Daughter most bright,  
And what with his Daughter he gave to the Knight.  
Then spake the Nobles, much marvel do we,  
The jolly blind Beggar we cannot here see:  
My Lords, quoth the Bride, my Father's so base,  
He's loath with his Presence these States to disgrace.  
The Praise of a Woman in Question to bring,  
Before her own Face, were a flattering Thing,  
We think thy Father's baseness, quoth they,  
Might by thy Beauty be clean put away.  
They had no sooner these pleasant Words spoke,  
But in comes the Beggar with a filken Cloak,  
A Velvet Cap and a Feather had he,  
And now, a Musician, forsooth, he would be.  
And being led in from catching of Harm,  
He touch'd his Strings which made such a Charm,  
Saying, please you hear some Musick of me,  
A Song I'll sing of pretty Bessie.  
With that his Lute he twang'd straightway,  
And thereon began most sweetly to play,  
And after a Lesson was play'd two or three;  
He strain'd out his Song most delicately.  
A Beggar's Daughter did dwell on the Green,  
Who for her Beauty might well be a Queen;  
A blith bonny Lass, and dainty was she,  
And many one call'd her pretty Bessie.

Her Father had no Goods nor Lands,  
But begg'd for a Penny all Day with his Hands,  
And yet in Marriage gave Thousands three,  
Yet still he has something for pretty Bessie.  
And if any one her Birth do disdain,  
Her Father is ready with Might and with Main,  
To prove she is come of a noble Degree,  
Therefore let none flout my pretty Bessie.  
With that the Lords and Company round,  
With hearty Laughter were ready to sound;  
At last said the Lords, full well may we see,  
The Bride and the Beggar's beholden to thee.  
With that the Bride all blushing did rise,  
With the fair Water all in her bright Eyes,  
Pardon my Father, brave Nobles, quoth she,  
That through blind Affection thus doteth on me.  
If this be thy Father, the Nobles did say,  
Well may he be proud of this happy Day;  
Yet by his Countenance well we may see,  
His Birth with his Fortune did never agree.  
And therefore, blind Beggar, we pray thee bewray,  
And look that the Truth to us thou dost say,  
Thy Birth and thy Parentage what it might be,  
Even for the Love thou bearest to pretty Bessie.  
Then give me leave, you Gentles each one,  
A Song for to sing, and then I'll be gone;  
And if that I do not win good Report,  
Then do not give me a Groat for my Sport.  
When first our King his Fame did advance,  
And fought for his Title in delicate Fraunce,  
In many Places great Perils past he,  
But then was not born my pretty Bessie.  
And in those Wars went over to Fight  
Many a brave Duke, a Lord and a Knight;  
And with them young Monford of Courage so free,  
But then was not born my pretty Bessie.  
And there did young Monford, with a Blow o'th' Face,  
Lose both his Eyes in a very short Space;  
His Life also had been gone with his Sight,  
Had not a young Woman come forth in the Night.  
Amongst the slain Men her Fancy did move,  
To search and to seek for her own Love,  
Who seeing young Monford there gasping to lie,  
She saved his Life through her Charity.  
And then all our Victuals, in Beggar's Attire,  
At the Hands of good People we then did require;  
At last into England, as now it is seen,  
We came and remained at Bednall green.  
And thus we have lived in Fortune's Despight,  
Tho' poor, yet contented, with humble Delight;  
And in my old Years, a Comfort to be,  
God sent me a Daughter call'd pretty Bessie.  
And thus here, my Nobles, my Song I do end,  
Hoping the same no Man doth offend;  
Full Forty long Winters thus I have been  
A silly blind Beggar of Bednall-green.  
Now when the Company had every one  
Heard the strange Tale in the Song he had shown,  
They were all amazed, as well they might be,  
Both at the blind Beggar and pretty Bessie.  
With that the fair Bride they then did embrace,  
Saying, You're come of an honourable Race;  
Thy Father likewise of high Degree,  
And thou art worthy a Lady to be.  
Thus was the Feast ended with Joy and Delight,  
A happy Bridegroom was made the young Knight,  
Who lived in Joy and Felicity,  
With his fair Lady pretty Bessie.

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